

**James Madison to R. R. Gurley, December 28, 1831.
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TO R. R. GURLEY. MAD. MSS.

Montpellier, Dec. 28, 1831.

Dear Sir, —I received in due time your letter of the 21 ulto. and with due sensibility to the subject of it. Such, however, has been the effect of a painful Rheumatism on my general condition as well as in disqualifying my fingers for the use of the pen, that I could not do justice “to the principles and measures of the Colonization Society in all the great & various relations they sustain to our own Country & to Africa.” If my views of them could have the value which your partiality supposes I may observe in brief that the Society had always my good wishes tho' with hopes of its success less sanguine than were entertained by others found to have been the better judges, and that I feel the greatest pleasure at the progress already made by the Society and the encouragement to encounter the remaining difficulties afforded by the earlier and greater ones already overcome. Many circumstances at the present moment seem to concur in brightening the prospects of the Society and cherishing the hope that the time will come when the dreadful calamity which has so long afflicted our Country and filled so many with despair, will be gradually removed, & by means consistent with

justice, peace, and the general satisfaction; thus giving to our Country the full enjoyment of the blessings of liberty and to the world the full benefit of its great example. I have never considered the main difficulty of the great work as lying in the deficiency of emancipations,

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but in an inadequacy of asylums for such a growing mass of population, and in the great expence of removing it to its new home. The spirit of private manumission as the laws may permit and the exiles may consent, is increasing and will increase, and there are sufficient indications that the public authorities in slaveholding States are looking forward to interpositions in different forms that must have a powerful effect.

With respect to the new abode for the emigrants all agree that the choice made by the Society is rendered peculiarly appropriate by considerations which need not be repeated, and if other situations should not be found as eligible receptacles for a portion of them, the prospect in Africa seems to be expanding in a highly encouraging degree.

In contemplating the pecuniary resources needed for the removal of such a number to so great a distance my thoughts & hopes have long been turned to the rich fund presented in the Western lands of the Nation which will soon entirely cease to be under a pledge for another object. The great one in question is truly of a national character and it is known that distinguished patriots not dwelling in slaveholding States have viewed the object in that light and would be willing to let the National domain be a resource in effectuating it.

Should it be remarked that the States tho' all may be interested in relieving our Country from the colored population are not equally so, it is but fair to recollect that the sections most to be benefited are those whose cessions created the fund to be disposed of.

I am aware of the Constitutional obstacle which has presented itself but if the general will be reconciled to an application of the territorial fund to the removal of the colored population, a grant

to Congress of the necessary authority could be carried with little delay through the forms of the Constitution.¹

¹ To E. D. White, a Representative from Louisiana, Madison wrote February 14, 1832, that error had been made "in ascribing to him the opinion that Congs. possesses Constitutional

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powers to appropriate public funds to aid this redeeming project of colonizing the Coloured people." He wished the powers of Congress to be enlarged on this subject.— *Mad. MSS.*

Sincerely wishing increasing success to the labors of the Society I pray you to be assured of my esteem, & to accept my friendly salutations.